

GUARDIAN EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL TELEVISION FESTIVAL 2013

JAMES MACTAGGART MEMORIAL LECTURE

KEVIN SPACEY

Good evening. I'm delighted to be here. First, I can honestly tell you that no event in my life this year has given me more heartfelt pleasure to prepare for than giving this speech today. As an Edinburgh Festival virgin I really didn't know what I was letting myself in for so you will be pleased to hear I did my homework before sitting down to write a word. And the relief for all of you is that I'm not someone with an important job in broadcasting using this speech to audition for an even more important job in broadcasting. Since, in the history of the MacTaggart Lecture, no actor has ever been asked to give this speech, I also won't be spending any time justifying why I'm giving this speech. If what I say today is responsible, then I alone am responsible for saying it. And if the MacTaggart were a political office that you actually had to run for, then the banner hanging over this lectern would be my campaign slogan and theme for today and it would read . . . "It's the creatives, stupid."

Now when I think of what it must have been like for this industry when the MacTaggart was first given almost 40 years ago, I imagine that the audience then probably went home at the end of the festival and shared that time honored tradition - when the entire family would gather around the television set - tuned to a certain channel, at a certain hour and watch a favorite movie (like 'It's a Wonderful Life'). They probably felt blessed to be living in such a modern age with a 21-inch television that brought the family together.

Today when I think about how all of you might go home at the end of this festival, you can sense things are a bit different now than they were then: Its more likely that you have already recorded 'It's A Wonderful Life' on your DVR, as you gamely try to gather the family around the giant movie screen you've installed in what used to be the basement; then you can try to find out where your children are on Facebook, and might ask your partner to stop Instagramming photos of the meal they've just ordered from the delivery service - during the film - while Grandma desperately pins even more pictures of cats on her Pinterest page, as your son quietly and surreptitiously clears his entire browser history, and your daughter Tweets how boring 'It's A Wonderful Life' is because its not in 3D or even in color . . . you too will feel that warm glow of precious family time when we all come

together to . . . ignore each other.

It is indeed a more complicated, modern and wonderful life, isn't it?

A bit of cautious humor as I begin my comments today. And I want to start by sharing with you a couple experiences I have had in television that profoundly changed my view of this medium and are perhaps some of the influences that led to my doing 'House of Cards' with Netflix – one of the primary reasons (if not the only reason) I was asked to speak today.

Now I was lucky, my parents loved literature and the arts so we had a house full of books and I was taken to the theater often as a young child. But I was also captivated by television. We loved to sit down as a family and watch *Upstairs/Downstairs* or *The Wild Wild West*, crowded round our set for the latest episodes. Television showed me a world beyond my neighborhood, people I had never met, places I had never seen. It fired my imagination, just like theater and books had. I was not a studious kid and I struggled to find things that would command my attention and engage my ideas and energies. But I knew I loved stories and drama. I had even sat down with a school friend and drew on a napkin in a restaurant the plans for the theatre we dreamed of opening one day – a theatre we would name Trigger Street after the street my friend lived on. Well, as it turned out I did eventually get to run a theatre, the Old Vic but I saved the name Trigger Street for my production company; so I am one very lucky guy because I have been able to live out my dreams almost so perfectly now as I look back on it, that you'd think I'd made it up. But in fact, it was a teacher who had an idea how to engage with young people who saved me. You see, it turns out I was drawn to acting at a very young age and this smart drama teacher pushed me towards a workshop, where I was blessed to meet the man who would become my mentor, the great actor Jack Lemmon.

At this workshop – that was being run by Mr. Lemmon in 1974 – we had to do scenes from *Juno & The Paycock*, which he was performing at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. And after I finished my scene, Jack Lemmon walked up to me, put his hand on my shoulder and said, "That was a touch of terrific. You should go to New York and study because you are born actor". Mind you, I was

just 13 years old.

So after graduating high school, I took Mr. Lemmon's advice and went to NY to study at the Juilliard School of Drama. And then I later got the chance to audition to play Jack's alcoholic son in the Broadway production of Eugene O'Neill's Long Days Journey into Night. So in 1986, 12 years after I first met him I found myself in a room (once again with Jack Lemmon) and after I finished my audition, in which we did four scenes together, once again Mr. Lemmon walked up to me, put his hand on my shoulder and said, "I never thought we'd find the rotten kid, but you're it. Jesus Christ, what the hell was that"? I spent the next year working every night alongside Jack – including our run in London at the Haymarket; and he became the most important mentor, friend and father figure I could have hoped to find. We did 3 films together, ending with Glengarry Glen Ross.

Fast forward to 1990 when I was invited by Jack to sit at his table at the American Film Institute Lifetime Achievement Award to Sir David Lean. And for those of you who haven't heard of Sir David Lean, two things you should know; one - he directed Lawrence of Arabia and two - if you don't know who David Lean is – you're in the wrong business.

Anyway, I remember being on the edge of my seat as Mr. Lean dedicated his entire acceptance speech to the idea of promoting and supporting emerging talents. It turns out he was concerned, perhaps even frightened, about the film industry's lack of commitment to developing talent and the greater and greater number of films that the studios were making that appealed only to the pulse and not to the mind. This is part of what he said that night in 1990 in front of all of Hollywood:

"I find myself thinking that nearly everything Noel Coward and I used to talk about in doing new things and nearly everything I learned in those early days seems to be contradicted today. We don't come out of many new holes anymore. We try to go back and come out of the old ones. Parts 1,2,3 and 4 and I think its terribly, terribly sad. Okay, do the old things - Parts 1, 2 and 3 - but don't make them a staple diet. This business lives on creative pathfinders. I terribly miss; we all miss, I think, somebody like the great producer Irving Thalberg. He had a foot in both camps: He understood us creative people. And he understood the money people. And we're in terrible danger. I think there are

some wonderful new storytellers coming up now. They are going to be our future. Please you chaps in the money department, remember what they are. I think the time has come, where the money people can afford to lose a little by taking risks with these new filmmakers”. And then Lean said the following... “I think if they give these new storytellers encouragement, we’re going to come up and up and up in the film business and find the new ideas. But if we don’t - were going to go down and down and down and lose it all - to television. Television is going to take over”. Hold onto that thought, because I’ll come back to it.

The second experience I want to tell you about is when I took my first trip to Los Angeles as a working actor in 1987; after studying at Juilliard and having begun my career in the theatre, I was offered a re-occurring role on the CBS series Wiseguy, which I immediately turned down. At this point I had only experienced two guest starring parts in episodic’s: one on The Equalizer and the other on Crime Story. The experience and the performances I gave in both these shows was, frankly, forgettable. I was an unknown theatre actor, who’d never worked in front of a camera, but I understood story, I understood arc and how to create a character and I wondered who all these guys were standing around the camera in suits; asking why my hair was that way, or why I was wearing that tie or why I was acting “that way”. These weren’t the directors or writers; they were . . . network people. “I see network people”. Sticking their fingers in creative decisions and having opinions about everything. Even though I was just starting out, I already knew that I didn’t want to have that kind of experience as a steady diet. So I turned down this offer to do Wiseguy. When my agents began to scream at me - who the hell did I think I was, etc., I picked up the phone and called Jack Lemmon.

I remembered during Long Day’s Journey Jack used to talk about when he first started out as an actor in the early days of television in the 1950’s. He often talked about those days as the “Golden Years” – we’ve all heard that term – the Golden Age. As I was being pressured to accept this role, I wondered what did he actually mean by that phrase. So I called and asked him; were you just being nostalgic or was there something different about the way television was back then? And he said to me . . . “You have to understand, kid, that television was brand new back then. It was a new medium

and nobody really knew if it was going to last - so you could try anything – comedy one week, drama the next, a soap, a musical, it was terrific. It hadn't been commercialized yet and no one knew if it was even going to be around long. There was a sense of total abandon”.

“Total abandon” . . . Now that was not a phrase I had ever associated with television: “abandon”. But now it makes sense to me when I discovered that James MacTaggart, in addition to being a dynamic creative force, was also in his personal life a volunteer parachutist in the Scottish Battalion. He chose to jump into space, willingly and bravely – literally taking a leap of faith - and his work reflects that sense of ‘abandon’, which is why we honor his memory today.

And so it struck me that this was exactly what I needed to apply – ‘total abandon’ - in order to tackle a character that would be memorable and have an experience that would be lasting. So I sat with Stephen J. Cannell and he promised I could have total freedom to create this role of Mel Profitt. So I took the part and it turned into a very satisfying experience. I did 7 episodes. And then they killed me off.

Brett Martin, in his new book ‘Difficult Men’ - a behind the scenes look at the past 15 years of what he calls the 3rd Golden Age of television - cites a very revealing story about what many creatives have had to deal with since the beginning of this medium. When the hit series Hill Street Blues was about to premier in 1980, NBC sent an internal memo to writer & show runner Stephen Bochco with a list of their concerns following a focus group testing of the program: “The most prevalent audience reaction indicated that the program was depressing, violent and confusing. Too much was crammed into the story. The main characters were perceived as being not capable and having flawed personalities. Professionally, they were never completely successful in doing their jobs and personally their lives were in a mess. Audiences found the ending unsatisfying. Too many loose ends...” - etc;

In other words, this memo was an entirely unwitting blueprint not only for what made Hill Street Blues such a historic program, but for all the shows that make up this Third Golden Age.

If those executives had had their way the road would have never been paved for The Sopranos, Rescue Me, Weeds, Homeland, Dexter, Six Feet Under, Deadwood, Damages, Sons of Anarchy, Oz, The Wire, True Blood, Boardwalk Empire, Mad Men, Game of Thrones, Breaking Bad and House of Cards.

If the list of programs I just read isn't the most powerful and inescapable evidence that the King of television is the creatives – then I don't know what would convince you. And our challenge now is to keep the flame of this revolutionary programming alive by continuing to seek out new talent, nurture it, encourage it, challenge it, give it home and the kind of autonomy that the past and present – of our three Golden Ages of television - has proved it deserves.

I don't think we do enough. And like David Lean, I'm disappointed. Disappointed this industry doesn't do more to support new talent. And just because I have achieved success in my career doesn't mean I'm not disappointed in myself. Disappointed that I haven't done better – that my work hasn't always stood up to the challenge or the time. I want to do better. I want to produce better stories. I want to do better plays. I want to encourage the best of the storytellers coming up in this industry; because I believe 'sending the elevator back down', Jack Lemmon's philosophy he handed down to me, is a great way we can all use success to benefit others.

And because I feel this way I wonder how many of you sitting here today also feel this way; despite how well things might be going for you, despite your success. Are you still disappointed - in your own reach, your own bar of excellence, your own ambitions, your creative courage, your own ability to use this medium - these platforms - so they bring out the best in yourself and in those you work alongside? And I wonder if you are - as I am - disappointed that this medium doesn't reach for the highest of excellence as much as it should, or could?

I suspect more will be said about talent this weekend than anything else. We all know that it's always been about creative talent, right? And I'm not just talking about emerging talents, because talent can come from anywhere and anyone. Although there is usually a focus on young talent, age

is not a barrier to great ideas or good stories. Talent comes in all shapes and sizes; we should be open to discovering those with a lot of experience and those with no experience. Now, granted it is also true that there is a good deal of undiscovered talent - that remains undiscovered for a reason. But we all know when we come across a talent who does have the 'it' factor and that's what I'm talking about. Until now, those of us in the television and film business have been able to wait for the talent to find us. We had the keys to the kingdom and folks needed to bring us their stories if they wanted to find a route to an audience. But now things are changing and changing fast. Kids aren't growing up with a sense of TELEVISION as *the* aspirational place for their ideas; all they know is the incredible diversity of entertainment, stories and engagement that they can find online and if they do love a show on Netflix or Apple TV you can bet they probably don't know which network it originally aired on. So how do we find these kids?

When I took over the Old Vic a decade ago the way we did it was, we set up Old Vic/New Voices – our program to support those entering this industry as a career. And instead of separating them like many theaters, television and film programs do, training writers separately, putting directors on a specific course etc; we wanted to bring them all together in groups, because I believe that's how drama is made.

We united writers, producers, directors and actors and helped them learn to collaborate, to develop, produce and realize their work together. It was an experiment but creatively fulfilling and has turned into such a successful one that (as an example), 28 productions at the Edinburgh Fringe this year will have been written, directed produced or performed by alumni of the Old Vic/New Voices program.

But we wanted to go further. We also had a social responsibility within our neighborhood. So we also created community plays. We went out to every school, community center/youth group and invited them in to the Old Vic. We built a creative sanctuary for kids who found it hard to communicate, where traditional education was uninspiring or who struggled in their relationships with their peers. I can only tell you how satisfying it is to hear from teachers that the boy who has never been able to concentrate in class suddenly has a sense of focus, or the girl wrestling with her

identity now has the words to express how she's feeling.

And here is my absolute conviction. This kind of program for young people is not just about whether they go into the arts. It's not just about finding the next generation of David Leans or Stephen Bochco's. It's also about our society. I believe culture is not a luxury item, it is a necessity. Storytelling helps us understand each other, translate the issues of our times and the tools of theater and film can be powerful in helping young people to develop communication/collaboration skills, let alone improving their own confidence. But for those who do have a passion for the arts and have a voice - I believe that we have a responsibility to seek them out, because if we don't they may never find their way over the walls we've built so effectively around our theater's, networks and studios and we may lose their stories forever.

By the way - I said a little while ago that my first job in television was doing those episodics but that's not actually true. Writing this speech I remembered that my very first job in television happened when I was 17. I had a summer job where I was picked up in a truck, in the San Fernando Valley in California, thrown into the back of this flatbed, with about 8 other guys and then driven out to Orange County, given a map of an area in some neighborhood and we had to go – door-to-door - to sell . . . On Subscription Television (one of the very first pay-cable systems). I kid you not but our opening line had to be, (Knock, knock, knock) . . . “Hi, have you turned On yet?” Alot of doors got slammed in my face. But little did I know that I was being innovative about television even as far back as 1976.

Now if there is anything about the character I play on ‘House of Cards’ - Francis Underwood – that suspect people might admire is that he too has embraced a sense of total abandon: abandonment to the rules. He has no allegiances, to party, to titles, to forms, to names, to labels: he doesn't care whether it's Democrats, Republicans, ideology or conviction. What he sees is opportunity and the chance to move forward. Okay, he's a bit diabolical but he's also very effective.

So like Francis, I've come here today with no ideology – and I'm not viewing today's event as a

television event. It seems to me since audiences are no longer making those kinds of distinctions, why should we? So let's throw the labels out. Or as Francis might say, "at least let's broaden the definitions – and if we have to call ourselves anything then aren't we all just storytellers?"

House of Cards - creatively - actually follows the model more often employed here in Great Britain. The television industry in this country has never really embraced the pilot season so looked to by the networks in the United States as a worthwhile effort. Now, of course we went to all the major networks with House of Cards and every single one was very interested in the idea... but every one of them wanted us to do a pilot first.

It wasn't out of arrogance that David Fincher, Beau Willimon and I were not interested in having to audition the idea, it was that we wanted to start to tell a story that would take a long time to tell. We were creating a sophisticated, multi-layered story with complex characters who would reveal themselves over time and relationships that would take space to play out.

The obligation of a pilot - from the writing perspective - is that you have to spend about 45 minutes establishing all the characters, create arbitrary cliff-hangers and generally prove that what you are setting out to do will work. Netflix was the only network that said, "We believe in you. We've run our data and it tells us that our audience would watch this series. We don't need you to do a pilot. How many episodes do you want to do?" And we said . . . "Two seasons?" By comparison, last year 113 pilots were made. 35 of those were chosen to go to air. 13 of those were renewed, but there's not many of those left. This year 146 pilots were shot. 56 have gone to series and we don't know the outcome of those yet. The cost of these pilots was somewhere between 300/400 million dollars each year. Makes our House of Card's deal for 2 seasons look really cost effective.

Clearly the success of the Netflix model - releasing the entire season of 'House of Cards' at once has proved one thing - the audience wants the control. They want freedom. If they want to binge - as they've been doing on 'House of Cards' - then we should let them binge. Many people have stopped me on the street to say, "Thanks - you sucked three days out of my life". And through this

new form of distribution, I think we have demonstrated that we have learned the lesson that the music industry didn't learn: Give people what they want - when they want it - in the form they want it in - at a reasonable price - and they'll more likely pay for it rather than steal it; well, some will still steal it, but I believe this new model can take a bite out of piracy.

We get what audiences want - they want quality. We get what the talent wants - artistic freedom. And the only way to protect talent and the quality of our work is for us to be innovative. And we also get what the corporations want, what the studios want, what the networks want - they want to make money and we *need them* to be profitable so they can continue to fund high quality production. They want the highest possible audiences with the greatest impact. We all get it. The challenge is can we create an environment where executives, those who live in data and numbers, are emboldened and empowered to support our mission; to have an environment with leadership that is willing to take risks, experiment, be prepared to fail by aiming higher rather than playing it safe.

It's like Steve Jobs. Why did he continually cite Henry Ford as an inspiration? Because Ford anticipated that people didn't know they needed and wanted a car until he invented one. And we didn't know we needed and wanted all that Apple has brought to our lives until Steve Jobs put it in our laps and hands.

We need to be that innovative. In some ways we need to be better than the audience. We need to surprise, break boundaries and take viewers to new places. We need to give them better quality. We might not disrupt the status quo overnight, but we can mould structures at the center of our businesses; because if we really put talent at the heart of everything we do, we might just be able to have greater highs across a broader spectrum of the industry. That's what I believe.

Bringing us right up to date we've just seen the release of the fifth and final season of Breaking Bad - capturing a huge audience and sending the media world into a frenzy of excitement about the Netflix effect. But this example also teaches us I believe another important lesson for the networks - and it's about patience - a much overlooked quality needed in creative development and a virtue not

found as a rule in network executives, hidebound for decades by pressure to find sure fire hits - quickly.

Breaking Bad was a slow starter, ratings wise and its biggest gains came after the series debuted on Netflix in late 2011. Early viewers of the network airing helped spread word, giving more awareness than those first season ratings suggested, while the Netflix streaming and clever scheduling of repeats by AMC began to win more fans and build anticipation. AMC believed in the show (even though it only got an original order of 6 or 7 episodes), because Mad Men had taught them that shows can take time to find an audience and that positive buzz and quality of audience were as important as sheer numbers when building a brand.

What Breaking Bad's rather late-in-life explosion in audience teaches us is that these shows need to be treated as assets to be nurtured, protected from the quick network trigger that can bail on a show before it has the chance to find its feet. After all - The Sopranos audience took four seasons to reach its apex, Seinfeld took a nearly five-year route to big time ratings - its first four seasons didn't even get it into the Nielson top 30.

And it requires guts to stick with a show when the numbers don't come, courage not to buckle under the pressure from the executive floor. But history proves that commitment to ideas and keeping faith in the talent has to be preferable to a pilot system that just throws everything at the wall in the hope that something sticks. If an audience is bonding to a show, however small that audience is to begin with, isn't it worth investing the time to help it find its true potential? And if that means ripping up the rulebook and scheduling in a different way, or playing with windows to build excitement and availability, then we should be prepared to try anything.

It takes every artistic medium a number of decades to find it's footing and be recognized as a legitimate art form. Novels were not taken seriously at first because they were not poetry. Photography was seen as inferior to painting for its first 50 years. It took decades for film to graduate from cheap nickelodeon entertainment for the masses to something considered to be a

fine art (Buster Keaton is now seen as a genius, but at the time was a vaudevillian clown in the flickers).

As for David Lean - no one paid any attention to his warning in 1990. No one took him seriously that night. The film industry didn't believe that television could ever become its biggest competitor. And yet it would be only 8 years later that 'The Sopranos' would debut on HBO; and the tide of actors, directors and writers seeking and finding a more fertile playground than the film industry was offering would begin. I do not think anyone today - 15 years later - (in terms of character driven drama) can argue that television has not indeed taken over. So it's really only in the past decade or so that television has finally been seen as a legitimate art form. Mostly because these pioneers in cable took chances and those stories found audiences thirsting for more sophisticated narratives & characters than the movie theaters were offering them.

The warp-speed of technological advancement - the Internet, streaming, multi-platforming - happens to have coincided with the recognition of TV as an art form. So you have this incredible confluence of a medium coming into its own JUST AS the technology for that medium is drastically shifting. Studios and networks who ignore either shift - whether the increasing sophistication of story telling, or the constantly shifting sands of technological advancement - will be left behind. And if they fail to hear these warnings, audiences will evolve faster than they will. They will seek the stories and content-providers who give them what they demand - complex, smart stories available whenever they want, on whatever device they want, wherever they want. Netflix and other similar services have succeeded because they have married good content with a forward-thinking approach to viewing habits and appetites.

The risk at this juncture is becoming too institutionalized, too schematic - thinking that something which is working NOW will necessarily work a year from now. The curse of success is that the stakes get higher. Careers are made, salaries increase, and people have reputations and track records to protect. The end result is a shift toward conservatism, away from risk-taking. And if there is one thing that overlaps between business and art, it's that in the long run, THE RISK-TAKERS ARE REWARDED.

One way that our industry might fail to adapt to the continually shifting sands is to keep a dogmatic differentiation in their minds between various media - separating FILM and TV and MINI-SERIES and WEBISODES and however else you might want to label narrative formats. Its like when I'm working in front of a camera . . . that camera doesn't know it's a film camera or a TV camera or a streaming camera. It's just a camera. I predict that in the next decade or two, any differentiation between these formats - these platforms - will fall away.

Is 13 hours watched as one cinematic whole really any different than a FILM? Do we define film by being something two hours or less? Surely it goes deeper than that. If you are watching a film on your television, is it no longer a film because you're not watching it in the theater? If you watch a TV show on your iPad is it no longer a TV show? The device and length are irrelevant. The labels are useless - except perhaps to agents and managers and lawyers who use these labels to conduct business deals. For kids growing up now there's no difference watching Avatar on an iPad or watching YouTube on a TV and watching Game of Thrones on their computer. It's all CONTENT. It's all STORY.

To say nothing of the audiences' attention span. For years, particularly with the advent of the Internet, people have been griping about lessening attention spans. But if someone can watch an entire season of a TV series in one day, doesn't that show an incredible attention span? When the story is good enough, people can watch something three times the length of an opera. We can make NO ASSUMPTIONS about what viewers want or how they want to experience things. We must observe, adapt, and TRY NEW THINGS to discover appetites we didn't know were there. The more we try new things, the more we will learn about our viewership, the more doors will open both creatively and from a business perspective.

There has been this myth of "nobody knows anything," that making good programming is a crapshoot. But frankly, that's just BS. We do know how this works and it's always been about empowering artists. It's always been about total abandon. It was that way when Jack Lemmon

began. It was that way when Grant Tinker birthed the shows of MTM Studios. It was that way when HBO threw up its hands and thought, “Why not a show about overweight, mob boss in New Jersey who kills people but also suffers anxiety attacks? Why not?”

And for all of Netflix’s big data and mathematical research, it was there when they opened the door to ‘House of Cards’. And boy we got lucky in the creative department because since Netflix had never done an original program before, they didn’t even have an office to give us notes. Can you imagine the notes we would have gotten if we’d been at a network that didn’t support us artistically...“Umm, we are very concerned about the fact that Kevin strangles a dog in the first five minutes of the show... we are afraid we’re going to lose half our audience”.

But we weren’t asked to compromise or water-down the story we wanted to tell by anyone. Not at Netflix and not at MRC, our production company. And that first scene - creatively - set the tone for the entire series.

So we know what works and the only thing we don’t know is why it’s so difficult to find executives with the fortitude, the wisdom and the balls to do it.

Because here’s the thing. And it’s good news. More than any other group gathered in the 37-year history of this lecture, you - in this hall today - are in a position to make it happen. To do work that you can both prosper from and go home proud of.

Fifteen years ago, I might not be up here speaking to you about this, because television was considered a lost cause. (Frankly, fifteen years ago I wouldn’t have been up here lecturing you because my agent would never have allowed me to even consider being on a television series after winning an Oscar, much less something “streaming.”)

To an unheard of degree we are free from that hoary old shadow cast over TV since its inception: the shadow of ratings. Not one of us will ever see a 30 share in our lifetimes. And that’s a wonderful,

freeing thing. Netflix did it right and focused on all the things that have replaced the dumb, raw numbers of the Neilson world - they embraced targeted marketing and "brand" as a virtue higher than ratings.

And the audience has spoken: they want stories. They're dying for them. They are rooting for us to give them the right thing. And they will talk about it, binge on it, carry it with them on the bus and to the hairdresser, force it on their friends, tweet, blog, Facebook, make fan pages, silly Jifs and god knows what else about it, engage with it with a passion and an intimacy that a blockbuster movie could only dream of. All we have to do is give it to them. The prize fruit is right there. Shinier and juicier than it has ever been before. So it will be all the more shame on each and every one of us if we don't reach out and seize it.

The question is how can we find more David Leans who will support the trailblazers; more men & women in the money departments who understand how to nurture and liberate the next level of thrilling talent, give them confidence so we can risk finding the new ideas?

Right down through the history of entertainment there has been leadership at networks, motion picture studios and theater companies - who understood the value of the creative community. Go as far back as you want and you will see the lesson there for us: whether during the heyday of the studio system in Hollywood, the group of actors & directors that formed United Artists, the hotbed of creative output at the Royal Court Theatre in the 1950's, the great eras in BBC drama that changed the face of British television, the efforts at Granada during those years of remarkable output or the ability that HBO and its brave executives have shown in keeping the flame of artistic excellence alive in these past 15 years.

But, crucially, those in the positions of leadership at all those institutions also knew that these policies, of supporting, nurturing and protecting their creative communities, was good for business. They found a way to make the art and commerce come together and had the guts to fight for quality and for talent.

But the new generation of creatives is different. We are no longer operating in a world where someone has to decide if they are an actor, director, producer or writer - these days kids growing up on YouTube can be all these things; We have to persuade them that there is a home for them in the mainstream. But we also have to make space for those single-minded geniuses that just have it all together, and all they need is a door to be opened - the Lena Dunhams of our world.

Now I would like to read to you the names of the future storytellers and trailblazers who will make their own amazing contributions to our industry...but I can't because we don't know who they are yet. But you can be sure there out there. Working away online, cutting together a first student film, rehearsing in some basement theater trying to put on a new work, applying for an Arts Council grant or filming their own Funny or Die comedy sketch.

It strikes me that there is at last a space for this new wave of talent to occupy. It is not yet as large a space as it could be, but the door is ajar and the windows are open. It's going to be up to us to decide to invite them in. Just as I wouldn't be standing here today if Jack Lemmon hadn't put his hand on my shoulder at the age of 13 and gave me the confidence to seek out a career as an actor. We can all send the elevator back down. We just have to make sure the floors we live on are not so high that we can no longer hear the voices of those who want to get on and take a ride up to our level - calling out for opportunity. Wherever they want to go in this new world - television and the Internet surely cannot afford to lose them all.

History will indeed be what we make of it. With all that is at our fingertips can we still find a way to gather together and share a more Frank Capra like world? We all still crave shared experiences. But these days the water cooler moment (where people gathered at work to talk about what they'd seen on TV the night before) has vanished. We no longer live in a world of appointment viewing. So the water cooler has gone virtual, because the discussion is now online. And it's a sophisticated, no-spoilers generation; and because of that we need never be alone with our Breaking Bad habit or our crazy obsession with Dexter. And stories are the great leveler - capable of crossing borders to unite

audiences. And when there is so much conflict in our world as countries go to war, with all that pulls us apart - it is culture that unites us.

So we are still a family - a beautifully diverse global family - and the optimist in me would argue that maybe we just have to work a little harder these days to make sure we actually share these experiences together - and try not ignore each other quite so much - in this wonderful life!

So I have tried to address the big questions that might have been on your minds today and I hope that I have set the tone for the conversation as this festival gets underway. It's been an honor and a privilege to stand before you all and give you some of my thoughts about talent, this industry and these new platforms.

And I want to leave you with the words of a man as good as any to address the nexus of commerce and art, Mr. Orson Wells - who once said: "I hate television. I hate it as much as much as peanuts. But I just can't stop eating peanuts"